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ABSTRACT

An analysis of sociocultural aspects of a dinner conversation is presented, part of a larger study of the pragmatics of second language discourse. Salient features of the discourse are examined in terms of implicit frames of reference about social membership that are brought into play in interaction. Primary data come from the conversation between an advanced Japanese non-native speaker of English (NNS) and two American colleagues, and secondary data from open-ended ethnographic interviews with the NNS. The analysis considers sociopragmatic features of discourse, such as solidarity, intimacy, distance, directness and indirectness, and cultural frames of reference, and how they influence the construction of a conversational participant structure, understood primarily in terms of negotiated solidarity. While the data suggest that differences in discourse strategies between the American and Japanese participants exist, a heteroglossic rather than consensual understanding of the sociocultural context of cross-cultural communication is suggested. (Author/MSE)

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Situated Discourse: The Sociocultural Context of Conversation in a Second Language

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This paper presents an analysis of sociocultural aspects of a dinner conversation, drawn from a larger dissertation study designed to generate a grounded theoretical understanding of the interactional pragmatics of second language discourse. Building on recent interpretations of indexicality, I present an analysis of a conversation between an advanced Japanese NNS of English and two of her American colleagues that considers sociopragmatic features of discourse and how they influence the construction of a conversational participant structure, understood primarily in terms of negotiated solidarity. While the data suggest that differences in discourse strategies between the American and Japanese participants exist, a heteroglossic rather than consensual understanding of the sociocultural context of cross cultural communication is suggested.

The pragmatic negotiation of meaning

Recent theories of language use suggest that discourse is generated and interpreted because it is situated in an interactive, emergent orientation to a shared sociocultural context of norms, values and expectations. Sajavaara (1987) argues against an autonomous linguistics which restricts meaning to word recognition, pointing out that discourse is a holistic process of negotiation, the purpose of which is not always to transmit messages but also to establish social contact. Echoing Reddy's (1979) criticism of conduit metaphors in language, Linell (1988) argues that any interpretation of discourse necessarily goes beyond surface linguistic meaning and is guided by underlying frames of expectation. Green (1983, 1989) notes that "words don't mean" but instead are used as indices which are used by people, constrained by conventional practice, who do. Meaning is neither literal nor autonomous but is produced within an "intersubjectivity" (Rommetveit, 1974, 1987) that is jointly negotiated and constructed in local contexts by social actors.

Ultimately, it is the underlying sociocultural matrix which allows the negotiation and construction of meaning in spoken interaction. Meaning is interactive

which guide appropriate communicative behavior, has significant implications for understanding the interactional dynamics of second language discourse.

In spite of the tendency to describe American culture (particularly in contrast with Japanese culture) as goal-centered and individualistic, the negotiation of meaning in English discourse is restricted neither to disconnected, autonomous individuals nor to a linear intentionality of interlocutors. As members of an interpretive community (Fish, 1981), constrained by the behavior and expectations of others with whom texts are negotiated and constructed, speakers intuitively follow the parameters of possible and acceptable interpretations, not in the form of rules but in terms of sociocultural practices and conventions.

Pragmatic notions of linguistic indexicality can be integrated with more social approaches to discourse, such as those used in the ethnography of communication (see Briggs, 1988). Language is an index of the social order and the relations which articulate the status and social distance established among interlocutors. The structure, coherence, and meaning of discourse can be seen as an integral function of the social identity of the interactants involved. Talk as an index reflects social organization; as practice, it produces the social order (Gal, 1989). An emergent, interactional understanding of discourse sees the negotiation of the social position interactants take vis à vis each other as critical in creating the shared intersubjectivity necessary for the mutual interpretation of linguistic forms.[1]

As an emergent and negotiated process, discourse simultaneously implicates both referential as well as social meaning (Olson, 1980).[2] On the one hand, discourse conventions index pragmalinguistic notions such as topicality, reason, and coherence. On the other hand, sociopragmatic patterns implicitly locate speakers within socially constructed participant structures (Erickson, 1989; Philips, 1972). Any utterance will then carry both linguistic and social reference. Thomas' (1983) distinction between pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic is a useful heuristic to account for the pragmatic gaffes of NNS, but her admittedly fuzzy binary division between the two categories does not fully capture the sociocultural context which underlies the pragmatic negotiation of meaning in discourse. I would suggest that, particularly for the advanced learner, the more subtle dimension of constructing appropriate social distance and status (as defined and negotiated in local contexts) may pose as great a pragmatic hurdle for the second language learner as the more explicit aspects of interactional pragmatics and defined speech acts.

Erickson's (1989) analysis of a traditional Italian-American family's dinner conversation demonstrates the importance of the structure of participation in shaping discourse. Erickson shows how the coherence of narrative is accomplished in part because of the family members' shared reference to their social

roles and status. Erickson builds upon (while slightly restricting) Philips' (1972) original notion of participant structure in order to capture the authority of speakership in conversation, reflected in who has narrative access (both quantitative and qualitative) to the floor.

The concept of participation structure, however, can be expanded to incorporate a broader notion of the sociocultural context and patterns of interaction. The structure of participation encompasses the negotiation of a locally instantiated speech community which indexes not only status, primary in Erickson's discussion, but also shared perspective and solidarity. This socially situated process is especially evident in cross cultural discourse, since interlocutors jointly construct an intersubjectivity that calls upon culturally generated assumptions to mediate discourse.

Data

In this paper, I analyze a dinner conversation involving a Japanese NNS and two American NS colleagues. The conversation is part of a larger body of qualitative data, collected in an ongoing dissertation study investigating the pragmatics of cross cultural conversation between Japanese NNS and American interlocutors in a university setting. I look at salient features of the discourse in terms of implicit frames of reference about social membership which are brought into play in interaction. Primary data consist of the conversation,[3] while secondary data include open-ended ethnographic interviews with the Japanese NNS interlocutor.

The nonnative speaker is Kazuko,[4] a core informant in the larger study, who is an advanced speaker of English (defined loosely as "proficient" enough in English to be accepted into a U.S. university and to successfully pass academic classes). Kazuko is a post-doctoral researcher in chemistry (about 35 to 40 years old) who has been in the U.S. approximately six months at the time of the conversation. The dinner takes place at Kazuko's apartment. In addition to Kazuko and her mother (with whom she lives), there are two other participants: Sandy (S) and Valerie (V), both professional colleagues of Kazuko.

Kazuko met Sandy more than a year and a half ago when Sandy worked at Kazuko's university research lab in Japan on a six month fellowship. Sandy speaks only a few words of Japanese, while Kazuko's mother speaks only elementary English. Although Sandy and Valerie are close friends who were in graduate school together, it is the first time for Valerie to meet Kazuko. The three women all have PhD's in the same field, and thus the status among them, according to

macro sociological indices, is roughly equal. Sandy and Valerie are in town for a professional conference and are spending the night at Kazuko's apartment. The conversation was recorded by Kazuko's mother, at my request.

Analysis

The conversation, both to my ears and to Kazuko's recollection, evidences a rather successful interaction. The pace is lively, with a good deal of laughter and joint involvement in various topics throughout the conversation. An interesting example of the positive intersubjectivity established among the three major participants is the exchange which takes place while they are talking about Kazuko's mother, who has just recovered from a bad case of the measles, for the
second time. (Her mother is 65 years old.)

V I thought that if you, I didn't realize you got them again. I didn't realize that was, huh!
S You're doctor said /
K Unhun
S Huh!

The positive, shared understanding illustrated in this exchange (which also nicely demonstrates how interpretation is based not on mechanistic notions of linguistic accuracy but on joint, emergent interpretation) does not necessarily equate, however, with a similar view of membership and social distance.

Instant intimacy

Throughout the conversation, both Sandy and Valerie employ discourse patterns which serve to develop a high solidarity, what Scollon and Scollon (1981) call the instant intimacy of positive politeness, emphasizing solidarity and commonality. Sandy and Valerie accomplish this using three pragmatic patterns of discourse:

(1) solicitation of information,
(2) reference to shared experience, and
(3) good-natured teasing.

Throughout the conversation, Sandy and Valerie solicit information from Kazuko, seen in the sustained questioning about her experiences, her ideas, her opinions, etc.

V And so you've been here in town six months?
K Yeah, almost, yes
V Do you feel accustomed to it yet?
K Yeah, , after, we, you know we spent uh three or four nights away on a trip, we feel this our home hhh {hhh}
S Oh so it's good to go away
K {Yeah, wh--
S {so you can do that
V And this is your first time to be, in the United States,
{or have been, or not for you
K {For her, but not for me
V Where were you before?
K In the North {University of--
V {And were you working there?
K Yeah with Dr. Mary Brown
V Was that the same woman you're working with {here?
K {Yeah

By soliciting information, Sandy and Valerie are expressing interest in Kazuko's situation, which in turn tends to create a closer proximity and the basis for a better understanding.

Sandy and Valerie also explicitly reference shared experience with Kazuko. Sandy talks often about her experience in Japan, what she and Kazuko did together while she was there, and her continuing interest in Japanese culture. She also talks about her efforts to find a good doctor in terms of an experience that is "the same" as Kazuko's:

S I have a choice so, I should find a good doctor, but it's hard-, I mean it's the same with you,

Further, Sandy occasionally demonstrates a noticeable tendency toward "foreigner talk," using simplified, non-grammatical sentence structure and easily understood non-linguistic information: "If she sings, we shh." Although FT modifications are unnecessary in light of Kazuko's advanced linguistic ability,[5] Sandy's use of FT nevertheless reflects an accommodative convergence and

identification with Kazuko, one which emphasizes a shared perspective and orientation toward Kazuko's point of view.

Valerie, who is meeting Kazuko for the first time, also explicitly attempts to indicate commonality. Speaking about the songs Kazuko's mother sang to her when she was a child, Valerie tells Kazuko, "You say that you thought all of the kids should have known the lullabies? I know that I've had that reaction too." In a different context later in the conversation, Valerie again explicitly references a shared experience with Kazuko. She says, "I'm gonna have something of a similar experience of being somewhere that I don't speak the language because I'm going to Spain next year." Both Sandy and Valerie are negotiating to create a common bond with Kazuko, essentially saying, "I know how you feel. I feel the same way. I have the same experience," thus constructing a sense of belonging to the same
group, being in the same boat with similar view of the waves of life.

The good-natured teasing, which occurs occasionally throughout the dinner, serves to reinforce this sense of solidarity. Sandy, for example, kids Kazuko's mother for being "a crazy skier" and, in the following exchange, of not being the kind of person who could possibly be shy:

K She is embarrassed
S N::o! you!? hhh {All hhh} Not-, it's not possible
All hhh
K She is a shy, shy woman
S But she is also a performer
K Right
Mo Shy woman, I am shy woman
All hhh

Teasing in good jest is a positive bonding strategy reserved for members of the same group, as can be seen in the teasing which occurs between the two native speakers when Valerie, who is from Virginia, kids Sandy about not understanding the South:

V She's never been to the South at all, the South, the part of the country, I mean the Southeast that is, so, , {She's just ignorant,
S {I'm not a Northerner,
I'm ignorant, hhh

Greater distance

Kazuko, however, does not demonstrate as strong a concern for constructing intimacy as her native speaker interlocutors. While she is friendly and responsive, she is also more reserved and appears to maintain greater social distance and evidence a corresponding lack of reciprocity to the enthusiastic solicitation of her colleagues. First, Kazuko is less solicitous of Sandy or Valerie's experiences than they are of hers. Second, she tends to hedge when asked to give her opinion. She requests clarification, for example, when Valerie asks about her impressions of America:

K This particular, , town you mean?
V Just, well
K Or America?
V This place yes, well, I guess this place because you're here. I mean did you have strong um, feelings and impressions and reactions to coming here?
K Um, , I don't know if I, understand your question correctly but uh , , ,

Kazuko's reticence may stem in part from a sense of deference or self-deprecation. She seems to be more comfortable talking about her mother than herself, and when Valerie's question about America is later pursued by Sandy, Kazuko again shifts the focus away from her own experience, directing it to her mother's. "She" refers to Kazuko's mother:

S And I was just curious if, what you thought about that
K Uh huh, yeah. Cause, I'm, I've been in America before so I'm not good person. Yeah, she's, she's I think got sort of shocked here

Often social distance is correlated in a linear fashion with indirectness. In the Brown and Levinson (1978) model, for example, greater distance engenders more indirect, "off record" behavior. Certain features of Kazuko's discourse in fact reflect a tentative indirectness. She expresses hesitant doubt rather than an assertive negation of Lucy's mistaken assumption that *Sweet and Low*, the song which Kazuko's mother sang to her as a child, is the "Southern" *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*, with "Really? I didn't know that."

K Yeah, my favorite was {Sweet and Low
S {In English? And you sang to her in English a long time ago?
K Right {hhh}

S And it's a Southern song too isn't it?
K Really? I didn't know that
S I somehow think of it as, , ,
K So, but it's England

In the middle of the conversation when the tape is being turned over, Kazuko also makes an indirect reference to not feeling well, hinting that the time has been dragging. She simply notes that the forty-five minutes (of side A of the tape) seemed more like ninety:

K Already? I said {only
S {hhh Doesn't seem so long. It seems too long for you?
K Well, , I thought 90 minutes {hhh
S {already gone hhh , , ,

Direct and indirect features

Certain features of Kazuko's discourse, however, can not be characterized as indirect. What stands out in Kazuko's discourse is the blend of both indirectness and directness. She demonstrates an explicitness which is clearly evident in two ways: first, she pointedly and somewhat emotionally criticizes Americans for producing poor quality consumer goods, and second she explicitly negates some of Sandy's well-intentioned but erroneous guesses about what she is saying.

Sandy, who knows a little (but not a lot) about Japan, often explains to Valerie about Japanese customs. At one point, Sandy is helpfully interpreting for Kazuko, only to be upstaged by Kazuko's rather explicit contradiction of her assumption:

S It's Japanese custom, to have rice for breakfast, {but - - -
K {oh not, you know
S - - - Kazuko-san and her mother don't ever have, sometimes have rice for breakfast
V What do you have for breakfast? ,
K Well, usually we have rice , ,
S Hm' !

The above exchange demonstrates the problems that can arise in making assumptions about what one's interlocutor thinks, something which Sandy does a number of times during the conversation:

S So, what do you miss most about Japan, besides our boss?
K Un hhh, The toilet hhh {I told you
S {hhh oh that's right I forgot, , What about your bathtub? I was telling Valerie, it's too bad we're not visiting you in Japan {K: ah} because you have such a lovely bathtub where you can be in water all the way up to here. Do you miss that?
K No {hhh

The emotional peak of the conversation is reached midway through the meal when Sandy, returning to Valerie's earlier question, asks Kazuko about her impressions of America. Sandy has noticed the gap between images of Japan prevalent in the U.S. and the "reality" of Japanese daily life, and she asks if Kazuko has noticed any similar discrepancies in Japanese perceptions of America. Kazuko's response touches on the lack of products made in America:

K Unhun, but everything is made in **Taiwan** or Thailand hhh this is - - -
S {Made in Japan
K - - - Japanese, and we don't want to send , , <...>
It's just that we don't know the place to, to look for, but still in Japan you-, you-, it's hard to find a products not made in Japan in Japan hhh, you know, You have to {look for
S {That's because Japan is so
protectionist about their trade hhh
K So, maybe that's true but uh, , I wondered, if **you** don't, if **you** don't make **things** , , ,

In her answer, Kazuko's voice is strained and high pitched, indexing not only the importance of the topic, but also the tension of the exchange, which is soon resolved by Sandy's offer of repair (i.e., she takes out gifts she has brought for Kazuko).

The exchange between Kazuko and Sandy invokes different social identifications which are brought to the surface. In effect, different group memberships are indexed and made salient via their talk. While Sandy uses the third person to refer to Japan ("their trade") and thus locates the problem outside the locus of the current group (i.e., the participant structure in which she is framing the conversation), Kazuko uses the second person ("you") to reference Sandy (and Valerie) as members of a different group (i.e., Americans). Sandy, in spite of her criticism of the Japanese government's (supposed) protectionist trade policies, is claiming Kazuko as member of her in-group. Kazuko, however, declares

a different allegiance within a different participant structure, one that casts Sandy and Valerie as an out-group in relation to herself as a Japanese.

Kazuko's statement carries an explicitness that is reinforced by its strong emotional tone. Sandy is somewhat surprised, which precipitates her rather quick repair:

S Here, I brought you things made in the U.S.
K Okay hhh
S Actually, it's all food hhh {hhh}

At this, the conversation gets back on track and proceeds relatively smoothly in much the same manner as it did during the first half, although political issues are not brought up again.

Culturally located frames of reference

In interviews conducted with Kazuko, group membership emerges as one of the central categories of her worldview. This categorization can be delineated according to two dimensions: cultural identity and work-affiliated association. Significantly, the sense of group membership seems to constitute one of the frames of reference that Kazuko uses when negotiating the participant structure in which she stands vis à vis Sandy and Valerie in the conversation.

For instance, in regard to her cultural identity, Kazuko characteristically (but not exclusively) refers to Japanese as "we" and Sandy and Valerie as "you," locating herself within a different group membership. At one point in the conversation, Kazuko contradicts Lucy's assertion that the conference hotel where everyone stayed was expensive, stating that, "Our Japanese standard, it's not expensive at all." Kazuko's rationale for the trade friction is that "you don't make things" and "your product's not very high quality." While Japanese-ness is not a completely positive category (in that Kazuko is critical of some aspects of Japanese society, especially the position of women), it is salient at certain points in the conversation, serving as a frame of reference that mediates the social distance constructed in the discourse.

A second dimension of group membership is reflected in Kazuko's references to an established circle of associates and colleagues related to her position in the research lab at the university. Aside from her mother, Kazuko interacts most regularly with Lilly, the American technician in Kazuko's lab, who shares not only various research duties but also mutual interests, one of which is working under their sometimes irascible department chair. When speaking with Lily,

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Kazuko's discourse reflects a high degree of shared perspective and social membership.

One characteristic of the frame of group membership for Kazuko appears to be its non-negotiable quality. More precisely, shared membership entails relatively less negotiation about group borders, as relationships with associates are categorized in terms of socially defined categories such as post doctoral research assistant or Japanese nationality. In contrast, Sandy and Valerie appear to be less dependent on membership as a category which shapes negotiation and more sensitive to the negotiation which shapes membership. In other words, Valerie and Sandy are negotiating membership in their discourse as individuals who are constructing a shared solidarity. Kazuko, in turn, appears to be employing a frame of reference which mediates the negotiation of a joint participant structure differently than her colleagues. Further, this difference seems to be related to social distance and an established group orientation. Importantly, this characterization of different frames of reference toward conversation is consistent with typical descriptions of Japanese interactional style as reserved and group-oriented.

As a frame of reference, however, group membership for Kazuko seems to have a dynamic character, one that is made relevant in negotiation with her conversation partners. The boundaries of the group frame may be relatively less permeable for Kazuko than they are for Sandy and Valerie, but the frame itself appears to shift according to the exigencies of the conversation. Kazuko's national identity as a Japanese, for example, is not evident throughout the conversation. In many contexts, it appears to have little or no bearing upon the conversation.

I would suggest that Kazuko's discourse reflects not fixed categories of culture or personality, such as deference or indirectness, that are laid upon social interaction as interpretive constructs. Rather, sociopragmatic patterns of negotiation about social distance and solidarity, at least partly based on culturally specific frames of reference, are made salient in local contexts according to the dynamics of the interaction.

On one hand, cultural assumptions and frames of expectation certainly mediate the negotiation in discourse, especially when the cultures differ as much as they do in the case of Japan and America. Kazuko, who has the opportunity to talk in the conversation but does not take it as might be expected of a NS, appears to be relying on a culturally specific frame of reference that mediates the construction of a participant structure reflecting more distance and less dynamic negotiability than the participant structure her American interlocutors are constructing. On the other hand, the discourse also reflects a mutual and jointly constructed intersubjectivity, which is the locally instantiated sociocult-

ural context. Social actors are capable of adapting to circumstances, including strikingly different cultural patterns of interaction. As McDermott and Tylbor (1986) point out, communicative breakdown tends to occur not primarily because culturally specific interactional codes are different, but rather because of the micropolitical dynamics of the interactional context, which are inherent in any communication, not just in the cross cultural variety.

While it seems fairly clear that Kazuko is employing a culturally specific frame of reference in this conversation, one which mediates her participation in the discourse and inhibits a quick negotiation of shared social solidarity, it also seems clear that this frame of reference is not static. Even though there is relatively less flexibility in Kazuko's notion of group membership that frames the construction of an implicit participant structure, the frame can change both over time and in the course of the conversation because it is negotiated in the local context according to the motivations of the participants. In this regard, there is another dimension of the conversation which needs to be pointed out, one that is related to the unconscious adoption of a native speaker standard in order to judge the success of cross cultural interaction.

The high solidarity strategies of solicitation and assistance provided by Sandy and Valerie to demonstrate their understanding of what Kazuko is trying to say, may contain implicit problems for the advanced NNS. In Sandy and Valerie's solicitation of Kazuko's experience in the U.S., for example, their repeated questioning indicates an interest in Kazuko and indexes a shared solidarity. At the same time, however, it also blocks Kazuko's ability to offer a full, extended answer. In much the same way, Sandy's tendency to fill in words and phrases for Kazuko that complete her thoughts, reflected in the exchange about protectionism, also serves to limit Kazuko's response:

K Unhun, but everything is made in Taiwan or Thailand hhh this is - - -
S {Made in Japan
K - - - Japanese, and we don't want to send, ,

While Sandy demonstrates that she understands Kazuko's point and her discourse perspective, she nevertheless also serves to undermine Kazuko's authority to make the point in the first place. This impression is reinforced when, in the same exchange, Sandy interrupts Kazuko's response (which she in fact solicited) to assert her own position:

K <...> it's hard to find a products not made in Japan in Japan hhh, you know, You have to {look for
S {That's because Japan is so protectionist about their trade hhh

Thus, the nominally collaborative pattern of the native speaker's concern to negotiate a shared perspective and sense of solidarity may also contain an implicit message which says, "Yes, we accept you and you are a part of our group, but you are a junior partner."

From this perspective, then, the negotiation of a structure of participation is not solely a question of different culturally contexted frames of reference and whether they are congruent or mismatched. It is also critical to consider whether the local sociocultural context instantiated by the speakers serves to facilitate or impede full and equal participation in discourse. Cultural understandings, like any cultural text, are used by individual, motivated actors to generate meanings in an emergent and interactive process of negotiation.

Limitations

The present analysis is certainly subject to a number of limitations which, while not restricted to qualitative approaches to discourse, should perhaps be noted. Other conversations, either of Kazuko or of the other three core participants in the study, have not yet been analyzed with the same lens utilized in this analysis. Further, I have not analyzed any discrepant cases (Erickson, 1986) that might challenge the interpretive categories generated thus far. But the principle idea which informs grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987) is that any theoretical understanding generated in one analysis needs to be "tested" against subsequent data. In this respect, the interpretation presented in this paper serves as a working hypothesis, valuable as a heuristic construct which can be used in further data collection and analysis in order to produce a more firmly grounded and more tightly integrated theoretical understanding.

Consensual and heteroglossic notions of culture

One generalization which may be supported by the data at hand, however, concerns the situated character of cross cultural interaction. The conversation provides evidence that directness is a critical element of Kazuko's discourse. It suggests that Kazuko's indirectness, both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic, may be related to her tacit cultural assumptions regarding group membership, but that this understanding is not a static cultural model of indirectness or conversational style, but a pragmatic frame of reference which is made salient by a motivated actor in the local context of interaction.

In other words, the data suggest that claims often made about Japanese communicative behavior may slight the diversity of cultural style. It is often argued that the Japanese are, among other things, selfless and evasive (Barnlund, 1975), reciprocally egalitarian (Yamada, 1990), mutually cooperative (Hayashi, 1988), intuitive (Clancy, 1990), deferential (Matsumoto, 1988), and harmonious (Condon, 1984). Even granting that these descriptions are true for all Japanese across all contexts (a highly questionable assumption in itself), it does not follow either (1) that a Japanese NNS of English will automatically employ first language communicative patterns in interaction in English, or (2) that broad, macro-level cultural attributes such as indirectness do indeed characterize micro-level interaction.

One must be careful, as Verschueren (1985) cautions, of "overgeneralizing the polarity between two cultures." The outlines of culture, even Japanese culture, are not as static and homogeneous as they often are made out to be. Befu (1981), for example, has pointed out the limitations of the group model of Japanese society. Other critical sociological and anthropological studies (see McCormick & Sugimoto, 1986; Moeran, 1988; Mouer and Sugimoto, 1986) have illustrated the ideological roots of consensus models of culture, whether Japanese or American, which serve to downplay social conflict and struggle, particularly in relation to issues of ethnicity, class, and gender.

The primary question of cross cultural pragmatic behavior seems to be not whether typical Japanese and typical Americans (whomever they may be and, importantly, whomever they may exclude) interact differently in their own culture, but rather what happens in local, situated contexts when individual speakers from different cultures interact and negotiate a shared intersubjectivity that draws upon but also modifies cultural conventions and understandings. In effect, in cross cultural encounters, participants make adaptations to communicative style according to both their experience and motivation.

It is only in context that we can speak of directness and indirectness of discourse style. To characterize a culture as direct or indirect misses the fundamentally dynamic and heteroglossic nature of culturally situated discourse. An understanding of intercultural communication which relies on the cultural mismatch hypothesis, the assumption that discrepant communicative styles invariably cause "miscommunication," fails to recognize the fuzzy borders of culture where advanced speakers of a second language live their lives. To depict culture as homogeneous and ahistorical, a "consensual system of abstractions located in the cultural actor's mind" (Quantz & O'Connor, 1988) is to deny the diverse and contending voices of any cultural text.

An understanding of the Bakhtinian notion of multivoicedness leads us to see culturally situated discourse as generated in response, and in turn serving as a

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stimulus, to other voices. Cultural models and norms of appropriateness are not static structures, but dynamic frames of reference used by social actors and inevitably shaped in their use, particularly their use in cross cultural encounters.

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NOTES

[1] This does not mean, of course, that in order to be understood, social actors must negotiate a shared membership. To the contrary, people can easily index an antagonistic, out-group relationship and understand each other perfectly well.

[2] A parallel distinctions is made between transactional and interactional utterances, where the former transmit information, and the latter establish social relationships (Brown & Yule, 1983; Kaspar, 1990). These categories distinguish different kinds of utterances, but I would argue, following Olson, that utterances index both dimensions simultaneously.

[3] In this paper, I draw from different exchanges located in different sections of the conversation, which totals ninety minutes in length. The appendix provides a longer fragment of the transcripted conversation which, while not containing all the elements or excerpts discussed in the paper, might allow a better a sense of the tone and character of the discourse.

[4] All names in the study are pseudonyms and bear no relation to the real names of informants.

[5] As Beebe (1988) and others have pointed out, accommodative convergence may also reflect stereotypes about speakers which are not connected with actual patterns of language use. Although some NNS may resent FT as condescending

or inappropriate, Kazuko expressed no general aversion to accommodative adjustments made by American native speakers for her benefit.

Transcript conventions

hhh	laughter
JJJ	Japanese
, ,	pause of about one-half second per comma
{ }	overlapping speech inserted as BC backchannels
{	overlapping, joint maintenance of the floor
???	words not understood
[ ]	analyst's explanation or description
<...>	conversation omitted
/	rising intonation
?	rising intonation at a question
-	speech that is clipped short
--	speech that is clipped short at an interruption
::	elongation of a sound
- - -	bridge: continuing speech that is overlapped

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APPENDIX

S Turkey cooking? that sounds strange!
K Its got the, top prize for, - - -
V {Dessert
K - - - dessert section
S And did you make something?
K No'
S No, just, just your wife, your husband, your husband hhh
V That sounds like a good idea, a departmental cookoff {hhh - - -
K {Unhun yeah
V - - - a good excuse to, , eat
K Yeah, and many people came from many countries so, and you can

taste different kind of dishes, its very interesting <...>

V And so you've been here six months? {Is that right?

K {Yeah, almost yes

V Do you feel accustomed to it yet?

K Yeah, , after, we-, you know we spent a three nights, four nights at the conference, we feel this our home hhh {hhh}

S Oh so its good to go away

K {Yeah, right

S {So you can do that

V And this is your first time to be, in the United States? {or have been--

K {For her but, - - -

V {not for you

K - - - not for me, yeah

V Where were you before?

K In the North/ {University of---

V {And were you working there?

K Yeah with Dr Mary Brown/ um,

V Was that the same woman you're working with here?

K Yeah

S Valerie asked, how did you get this post doc, I couldn't remember, Now, {M: oh} did she write you?

K Yeah, when, she decided to come here, from the North to here, she-, I think she sent letters to many people to annous [announce] about it and then, she's looking fo:r some people, to work with, um like technicians, and post docs and graduate students/ and so forth, so I was, I was unhappy with my possin [position] hhh, I was, sort of looking for, {S: unhun} looking for a chance to--

S {Which boss was this? {hhh

K {Well, well hhh {S: hhh} You know that hhh, so I wonder, if I could be uh, her post doc then, ,

S This is delicious. Prize winning food

K Okay hhh yeah

V And this is a, a one year/ or a two year post doc?

K Uh, Mary says two years, and,

S Kikuchi san/ Japan said one year {hhh

K {Yeah

S So who knows,

K But I have to write, present uh, document for extension/ for another one year, {S: unhun} and, maybe in, , before, the end of February, and to do, that, I have to report, how much progress I got during, and I got one year would be so fruitful for me and fruitful for Japanese government hhh or something like that {S: unhun unhun}, but actually I haven't, got anything yet, {you know {so I'm so,

V {hhh {But do you, but you hope to stay both years'

K Right, unhun, maybe, uh, yeah, I think so hhh [4 sec pause]

S The progress in molecular biology, is like, uh nothing nothing nothing nothing nothing,{unhun/} a lot

K Oh really!?

S Unhun <...> [end of side A]

K Already? I said only? hhh

S Doesn't seem so long,

K Really,

S It seems too long for you?

K Well, , , I thought 90 minutes {hhh

S {Is already gone there hhh , , ,

V It's funny though you say that, you thought all of the kids should have known the lullabies/ {unhun} I know that I've had that reaction too, my-, not about music, but my parents read stories to me {unhun/} that, that, they read to me a lot when I was very young and then I thought, everyone knew these stories because they seemed, they were sort of children's classics {unhun} and things like that, and then I talked to people and they never even heard of them you know? {right unhun} hhh it's :so funny, {yeah, unhun} it just seems like, I think-, {unhun} they have a defect you know hhh - - -

K {unhun yeah I thought--

V - - - they don't have an aura or {something like that

K {Right unhun yeah, , [JJJ with Mother]

S But back to Valerie's other question about America, {unhun/} cause when I went to Japan, I had this idea that Japan um-, everyone is so successful in Japan, they are making so much money and, they are working very very hard {unhun} and everyone has the highest technology everywhere, and, you know in America, you learn about-, I mean the image of Japan, {unh-un} is this society that is so successful and everybody works so hard, {unhun} and they're out-competing America and they're dangerous to use because they're so good {hhh} at business you know? {unhun} But then I go there, and the day to day Japanese life is not like that at all

K No,

S But, there must be the same sort of misconception {unhun} about America to Japanese people, and, I was just curious, if-, what you thought about that

K Unhun yeah, cause I'm-, I've been in America before, so I'm not {good person, yeah, - - -

S {But she's ???

K - - - she's, she's I think got sort of shocked, here to find uh, uh, actually your product's not very high quality, {S: unhun} a:nd you said, that you-, that when you came back America and send us a letter saying you've struck, to find out, uh, prices, lower than Japan but the quality is lower too, {S: unhun unhun} and she uh, couldn't believe it, was "we:ll, the Americans quality is lower than Japanese!" {S: unhun} It's so strange to her, but now she understands hhh a little bit and, even to find American product is very hard, here, it's very, , strange, you know-, we are trying to find some presents to send our friends in Japan/ {S: unhun} and we wanted to send something American, {S: unhun} American product, but it's so hard to find, nice, American hhh thing, well it's orange or, , potatoes {S: right} hhh it's really cheap and good, and you know, but but you cannot send them, we want to send something like a sweater or {uh hhh

S {Right made in America?

K Unhun, but everything is made in Taiwan or Thailand hhh this is- - -

S {Made in Japan

K - - - Japanese, and we don't want to send, ,

S Although like in Minnesota you can find hand-made things so, you know hand-made pottery {right} or hand-made embroidery or knitting and crocheting, or quilts/ {unhun} and that sort of thing is very popular, but, maybe it's not as popular in this state, cause it's so cold in Minnesota everyone stays home in the winter {hhh} and makes crafts hhh

V I don't think that would be, an uh, an accurate generalization {S: huh} cause I think in the South, that there is a, a tradition of crafts too yeah, it's just different kinds of crafts,

K It's just that we don't know the place to, to look for, but still in Japan you-, you-, it's hard to find a, , products not made in Japan in Japan hhh, you know, you have to {look for

S {That's because Japan is so protectionist about their trade {hhh

K {Well maybe, that's true but uh, , well I, I wondered if you don't, if you don't make things , ,

S Then, , yeah, I think it's just a matter of what's, you know, what's the least expensive is often the most available, {unhun} But not always

V Well it's, I think it's a matter of diversity thought, right? I mean, companies can have things, there are-, there can be factories here, there c a n b e factories other places, {unhun} so things can be made in various-, I mean it's just, a lot of diversity of products {unhun} s:o, I don't-, I'm not sure that I would sa::y, you know that you can't find American things cause you can certainly find American made products, <...> so, I think it's more-, I think-, there is just diversity,

S Here I brought you things made in Minnesota {hhh

K {okay hhh

S Actually it's all food hhh